

What is the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) and What Can SoTL Do for You and Your Department/School?*

Handouts for Deans, Chairs, Directors, and Other Administrators

**Members of the AAHE/Carnegie SoTL Cluster-
“Organizing to Foster the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning**

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***These handouts are intended to be of use to stimulate discussion about, increase support for, develop strategies to apply, formulate evaluation criteria for, and find resources about the scholarship of teaching and learning.**

WHAT IS THE SCHOLARSHIP OF TEACHING AND LEARNING (SoTL) IN HIGHER EDUCATION?

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Example Definitions of SoTL

In work at the Carnegie Foundation, the following definition has been used: **“problem posing about an issue of teaching or learning, study of the problem through methods appropriate to the disciplinary epistemologies, applications of results to practice, communication of results, self-reflection, and peer review”** (Cambridge, 2001).

Pat Hutchings (2002), senior scholar at the Carnegie Foundation, reminds us that SoTL builds on many past traditions in higher education including classroom and program assessment, K-12 action research, the reflective practice movement, peer review of teaching, traditional educational research, and faculty development efforts to enhance teaching and learning.

Martin, Benjamin, Prosser, and Trigwell (1999) argue that the scholarship of teaching is three related activities: **engagement with the existing knowledge on teaching and learning, self-reflection on teaching and learning in ones discipline, and public sharing of ideas about teaching and learning within the discipline.**

While Richlin (2001) argues, **“The scholarship part of the process involves composing selected portions of the investigation and findings [or integration or reflection] into a manuscript to be submitted to an appropriate journal or conference venue.”**

At Illinois State University, we have agreed to conceptualize SoTL as **“systematic reflection/study on teaching and learning made public.”** This definition was written in an attempt to include a wide range of research (broadly defined) on teaching and learning in the disciplines that is presented, published, or performed.

Good Teaching, Scholarly Teaching, and SoTL

Though there are connections among them, it is important to distinguish good teaching from scholarly teaching from the scholarship of teaching and learning. Though **good teaching** has been defined and operationalized in many ways (e.g., student satisfaction ratings, peer observation judgments, self reflective portfolios), good teaching is that which promotes student learning and other desired student outcomes. Good teaching will support department, college, and institutional missions and objectives. Decades of SoTL and other educational research provide us with a great deal of information on the practices that help promote learning (e.g., Astin, 1993; Chickering and Gamson, 1987; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991).

Scholarly teaching involves taking a scholarly approach to teaching just as we would take a scholarly approach to other areas of knowledge and practice. Scholarly teachers view teaching as a profession and the knowledge base on teaching and learning as a second discipline in which to develop expertise. Thus, scholarly teachers do things such as reflect on their teaching, use classroom assessment techniques, discuss teaching issues with colleagues, try new things, and read and apply the literature on teaching and learning in their discipline and, perhaps, more generally. Scholarly teaching is closely

linked to reflective practice (e.g., Brookfield, 1995; Schon, 1983). This conception of scholarly teaching is related to what Boyer (1990) labeled the scholarship of teaching.

The scholarship of teaching and learning involves systematic study of teaching and/or learning and the public sharing and review of such work through presentations, performances, or publications. “Study” is broadly defined given disciplinary differences in epistemology and the need for interdisciplinary SoTL. Presentations, performances, and publications may be local, regional, national or international. SoTL, then, shares established criteria of scholarship in general, such as that it is made public, can be reviewed critically by members of the appropriate community, and can be built upon by others to advance the field (Shulman, 2001). SoTL focuses on teaching and learning at the college level, and is primarily classroom and disciplinary based. Ideally, SoTL also involves application and use (McKinney, 2003).

SoTL as a National and International Field of Study and Movement

SoTL is not a short-term or local initiative or line of scholarship. There are journals, conferences, institutes, grants, discussions, etc. on SoTL at the national and international levels. Generally, such activities are a measure that scholarship in that area of the discipline is produced and is legitimate. These activities are embedded both in specific disciplines (and most disciplines have a peer-reviewed, college-level pedagogical journal, for example) and in organizations that cut across disciplinary borders such as American Association for Higher Education (AAHE), the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, Pew Charitable Trusts, and many higher education institutions around the world. Federal governments in the UK and Australia (where higher education is much more centralized than here) have well funded SoTL initiatives. Issues of defining and rewarding SoTL are frequently discussed in these arenas. Though there is rarely complete consensus, shared opinions such as those expressed in these materials are created.

If anyone is interested in a lengthy bibliography of work on SoTL (not SoTL research but work about the field of SoTL), go to

<http://www.sotl.ilstu.edu/resLinks/bibl.shtml>

WHAT SoTL CAN DO FOR YOU AND YOUR DEPARTMENT/SCHOOL
Cluster Team, Illinois State University

The scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) can be very functional for departments/schools, their faculty, staff, and students. SoTL can...

- Help with program assessment
- Be used in program review and accreditation
- Revitalize some senior faculty members
- Involve new networks and partnerships among faculty, staff, and students
- Provide research opportunities for students
- Bring in some outside funding (not much yet, but there are growing funding opportunities)
- Add publications and presentations to faculty accomplishments
- Provide opportunities to be involved in a national/international higher education initiative
- Be used to strengthen budget requests for additional operational or personnel funds
- Be added to graduate student training and preparing future faculty
- Increase faculty and department/school visibility in your discipline more broadly
- Increase faculty credentials for major internal and external teaching awards
- Demonstrate to job candidates that you value teaching
- Improve teaching and student learning in your department, school, and college

There are a number of individuals on most campuses (e.g., teaching center staff, SoTL CASTL or Cluster Team Members, and various faculty members doing SoTL work) who can assist you and your department/school with strategies for the above uses of SoTL.

INTEGRATING AND SUPPORTING THE SCHOLARSHIP OF TEACHING AND LEARNING THROUGH ANNUAL EVALUATION AND PROMOTION AND TENURE DOCUMENTS

Developed by the AAHE/Carnegie Cluster Team- Organizing to Foster SoTL

An important goal of advancing the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) is to incorporate it into the faculty evaluation system. We offer the following language to help campuses incorporate SoTL into the faculty evaluation system in order to provide faculty with additional scholarship options and opportunities.

“SoTL is integrating the experience of teaching with the scholarship of research. It is the ongoing and cumulative intellectual inquiry, through systematic observations and ongoing investigations, by faculty into the nature of learning and the impact of teaching upon it” (Hutchings & Schulman, 1999).

Evaluation Standards:

The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) is a form of the scholarship of discovery and/or the scholarship of integration. SoTL that is methodologically rigorous, makes a significant contribution, receives peer review, and is made public as described below should be rewarded as the scholarship of discovery or integration and, thus, by ISU ASPT guidelines under “scholarship and creative productivity.” The relative value of SoTL compared to other forms of scholarship may be less, equal, or greater depending on factors such as institutional mission, department/discipline characteristics and culture, and individual assignments.

1. SoTL exhibits methodological rigor
 - Systematic and deliberate study of teaching and learning
 - Qualitative and quantitative methods are appropriate
 - Evaluation is based on the standards of qualitative and/or quantitative traditions in the discipline
2. SoTL has substantive implications/outcomes as evidenced by any or all of the following
 - Results of research are applied to the practice of teaching
 - Applicability and utility of research extend beyond the site of research
 - Results of research enhance the quality of teaching and learning
 - Development of new or significantly revised theoretical understanding or applied knowledge
 - Illustrates how traditional course issues/materials can be addressed in new ways
3. SoTL is peer reviewed
 - Qualified scholars in relevant fields constitute peers
 - The reviewers critically evaluate the work’s rigor and implications
4. SoTL is made public
 - Scholars share the work to affect practice of others

- Scholars use conventional academic venues appropriate to the discipline to disseminate the work including presentations, journals, juried exhibits, etc.

Selected Websites for information, opportunities, and links to other sites

Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) web site at Illinois State University- Home page

<http://www.sotl.ilstu.edu/>

Bibliography of readings related to SoTL

<http://www.sotl.ilstu.edu/resLinks/selfBibl.shtml>

SoTL Researcher Collaboration Database

<http://www.sotl.ilstu.edu/sotlcollaboration/>

Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching

<http://www.carnegiefoundation.org>

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